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JOSHUA LEDERBERG

PRESIDENT

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Mr. Thomas Reed
National Security Council
Washington, D.C.

Dear Tom:

I was glad to note your role on the President's commission on MX and that this will also embrace larger issues of nuclear deterrence policy.

Let me state one point very succinctly. The main argument against 'minimal deterrence', and for counterforce, flexible options, and multiple regimes for platforms, is of course to give the NCA some way to respond to less-than-total attacks on our homeland, and thereby to deter those.

I do not question the need for a robust CAPABILITY for flexible response as part of the deterrent posture. But deterrence must rest even more on how we establish for ourselves and our allies, and communicate to the Soviets, our RESOLVE to use that capability under threat.

One could reasonably conclude that much of the impetus for heavy investment in multiple regimes is to bolster our own confidence that, with a variety of technical options, the NCA will find some way to gird its loins and make the most problematical and painful decisions in human history. This is not, to me, very persuasive; but as you have perhaps heard me sermonize to Mr. Weinberger, it does not help now to loudly advertise (the Russians overhearing) to our own public our purported strategic inferiority. What message does that convey about our resolve?

These considerations do interact with our policy about force size and structure; I hope you will assure that they are, in a novel way, given commensurate attention during your forthcoming studies.

Miscalculation about resolve is certainly the most dangerous provocation to unintended war, as we know from Korea to the Falklands. I have no easy answer, but to set it aside under the umbrella of one more technical option is not a response either. How we deal with the brushfires the Sovs. will ignite from time to time to probe us: our capability of projecting force to the firelines will manifest a demonstration

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of resolve in these theaters more effectively than any declarations. These territories are full of booby traps too: very good reason to be sure that our policy matches our resources to deal with eruptions in distant theaters (for which MX is no help at all.)

Yours truly,

Joshua Lederberg